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FOREWORD

TRANSCRIPT WARNING. All written transcripts are imperfect abstracts of spoken conversation. Variations in sound quality and in the aural acuity of listeners can and do produce wide variations in what is heard. Even though transcripts may be prepared at great effort and with great care, many points of ambiguity are inevitable, and erroneous interpretations from transcripts are always possible. Therefore, to ensure full confidence in any and all quotations from the presidential recordings, users are strongly urged to check all transcript renditions against the actual tape recordings before publication.

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PUNCTUATION. The following conventions are used throughout the transcripts:

* * * To indicate a pause in the recording while the speaker listens to the person speaking at the other end of the telephone. Used when only one side of a telephone conversation is recorded.

[?] When the transcriber is not certain of what is said on the recording.

. . . . To indicate a sentence which the speaker trails off without completing it.

. . . When a speaker is interrupted before a sentence is completed.

_____ To indicate the speaker's emphasis.

[] Used to enclose editorial comments of the transcriber such as [Meeting appears to be breaking up.] or [Several speakers speak at once and none of the words are intelligible.].

NAMES. The first time a name is mentioned, the full name is provided whenever it is known. "JFK" and "RFK" are used for President Kennedy and Robert Kennedy, respectively. When the identity of a speaker is unknown, "Speaker?" is used; when the identification of a speaker is uncertain, a question mark follows the name. The Tables of Contents list only the participants who have been at least tentatively identified as speakers. The heading of each transcript gives the names of all participants listed in the President's Appointment Books as scheduled to attend the meeting.

OFF-THE-RECORD MEETING ON CUBA

October 16, 1962

6:30 - 7:55 P.M.

JFK: Uh, anything in 'em?

Carter: Nothing on the additional film, sir. We have a much better read-out on what we had initially. There's good evidence of their back-up missiles for each of the four launchers at each of the three sites, so that there would be twice the number for a total of eight which could eventually be erected. This would mean a capability of from sixteen or possibly twenty-four missiles. We feel, on the basis of information that we presently have, that these are solid propellant, inertial guidance missiles with eleven-hundred-mile range rather than the oxygen propellant, uh, radar-controlled. Primarily because we have no indication of any radar or any indication of any oxygen equipment. And it would appear to be logical from an intelligence estimate viewpoint that if they are going to this much trouble that they would go ahead and put in the eleven hundred miles because of the tremendously increased threat coverage. Let me see that [words unintelligible].

JFK: What is this map?

Carter: That's, shows the circular range . . .

JFK: When was this drawn?

Carter: . . . capability.

JFK: Is this drawn in relation to this information?

Carter: Uh, no, sir. It was drawn in, uh, some time ago, I believe, but the ranges there are the nominal ranges of the missiles rather than the maximum.

Speaker ?: The circles [around, or are added?] . . .

Carter: That's a ten hundred and twenty circle, as against eleven hundred.

JFK: Well, I was just wondering, uh, whether, uh, San Diego de los Baños is where these missiles are?

Carter: Uh, yes, sir. Well, the . . .

JFK: Well, I wonder how many of these have been printed out.

Bundy: Yeah, well, the circle is drawn in red ink on the map, Mr. President.

Carter: The circle is . . .

JFK: Oh, I see. It was never printed?

Carter: No, that's on top.

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JFK:

I see. It isn't printed.

Carter:

It would appear that with this type of missile, with the solid propellant and inertial guidance system, that they could well be operational within two weeks as we look at the pictures now. And once operational, uh, they could fire on very little notice. They'll have a refire rate of from four to six hours over each launcher.

JFK:

What about the vulnerability of such a missile to a, t-, uh, bullets?

Speaker ?:

Highly vulnerable, [Mr. President?].

Carter:

Uh, they're vulnerable. They're not nearly as vulnerable as the oxygen propellant, but they are vulnerable to ordinary rifle fire. We have no evidence whatsoever of any nuclear warhead storage near the field launchers. However, ever since last February we have been observing an unusual facility which now has automatic anti-aircraft weapon protection. This is at [Bahu?].

It's the best candidate for a site, and we have that marked for further surveillance. However, there is really totally inadequate evidence to say that there is a nuclear storage capability now. These are field-type launchers. They have mobile support, erection and check-out equipment.

JFK:

Uh, General, how long would you say we had, uh, before these--at least to the best of your ability for the ones we now know--will be ready to fire?

Carter:

Well, our people estimate that these could be fully operational within two weeks. Uh, this would be the total complex. If they're the oxygen type, uh, we have no. . . . It would be considerably longer since we don't have any indication of, uh, oxygen refueling there nor any radars.

Speaker ?:

This wouldn't rule out the possibility that one of them might be operational very much sooner.

Carter:

[Well, or No?], one of 'em, uh, one of them could be operational much sooner. Our people feel that this has been, being put in since probably early September. We have had two visits of a Soviet ship that has an eight-foot-hold capacity sideways. And this about, so far, is the only delivery vehicle that we would have any suspicion that they came in on. And that came in late August, and one in early September. [Uh. . . .]

Speaker ?:

Why would they have to be sideways [though?]?

Carter:

Well, it's just easier to get 'em in, I guess.

Speaker ?: [Well?], this way it sets down on [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?: Well, all right.

Speaker ?: Fine.

Rusk: Uh, the, the, the total readout on the, uh, flights yesterday will be ready tonight, you think?

Carter: It should be, uh, finished pretty well by midnight.

JFK: Now what, that was supposed to have covered the whole island, was it, uh?

Carter: Uh, yes, sir.

JFK: Except for . . .

Carter: In two throws. But, uh, part of the central and, in fact, much of the central and part of the eastern was cloud covering. The western half was, uh, in real good shape.

JFK: I see. Now what have we got laying on for tomorrow?

Carter: There are seven, six or seven . . .

McNamara: I just left [word unintelligible]/[equipment?]. We're having ready seven U-2 aircraft: two high-altitude U-2s, five lesser-altitude U-2s; six equipped with an old type film, one equipped with a new type, experimental film which hopefully will increase the resolution. We only need two aircraft flying tomorrow if the weather is good. We will put up only two if the weather is good. If the weather is not good, we'll start off with two and we'll have the others ready to go during the day as the weather improves. We have weather aircraft surrounding the periphery of Cuba, and we'll be able to keep track of the weather during the day over all parts of the island. Hopefully, this will give us complete coverage tomorrow. We are planning to do this, or have the capability to do this, every day thereafter for an indefinite period.

Carter: This is a field-type missile, and [REDACTED] it's designed to be fielded, placed and fired in six hours. Uh, it would appear that we have caught this in a very early stage of deployment. It would also appear that there does not seem to be the degree of urgency in getting them immediately into position. This could be because they have not been surveyed. Or it could be because it is the shorter-range missile and the radars and the oxygen has not yet arrived.

JFK: There isn't any question in your mind, however, uh, that it is an intermediate-range missile?

Carter: No, there's no question in our minds at all. These are . . .

JFK: Just [word unintelligible] . . .

Carter: . . . all the characteristics that we have seen, [live ones?].

Rusk: You've seen actual missiles themselves and not just the boxes have you?

Carter: No, we've seen. . . . In the picture there is an actual missile.

Rusk: Yeah. Sure there is.

Carter: Yes. There's no question in our mind, sir. And they are genuine. They are not, uh, a camouflage or covert attempt to fool us.

Bundy: How much do we know, uh, [Pat?]? I don't mean to go behind your judgment here, except that there's one thing that would be really catastrophic would be to make a judgment here on, on a bad guess as to whether these things are. We mustn't do that.

Carter: Well . . .

Bundy: How do we really know what these missiles are and what their range is?

Carter: [REDACTED]

Bundy: What [made?] the verification? That's really my question. How do we know what a given Soviet missile will do?

Carter: [REDACTED]

Bundy: I know that we have accepted them . . .

Carter: This is . . .

Bundy: [REDACTED]

Carter: [REDACTED]

Rusk: Pat, we don't know of any sixty-five-foot Soviet missile that has a range of, say, fifteen miles, do we?

Carter: Fifteen miles? No, we certainly don't.

Rusk: In other words, if they are missiles this size, they are missiles of considerable range, I think.

McNamara: I tried to prove today--I am, I'm satisfied--that these were not MRBMs. And I worked long on it. I got our experts out, and I could not find evidence that would support any conclusion other than that they are MRBMs. Now, whether they're eleven-hundred miles, six-hundred mile, nine-hundred mile is still a guess in my opinion. But that they are MRBMs seems the most probable assumption at the moment.

Speaker ?: I would apparently agree, uh, given the weight of it.

JFK: Is General Taylor coming over?

McNamara: He is, uh, Mr. President.

JFK: Have you finished, General?

Carter: Yes, sir. That, I think that's at, uh, [word unintelligible] . . .

Rusk: [Because?] we've had some further discussion meetings this afternoon and we'll be working on it [presently?] this evening, but, um, I might mention certain points that are, some of us are concerned about. The one is, um, the chance that, uh, this might be the issue on which, uh, Castro would elect to break with Moscow if he knew that he were in deadly jeopardy. Now, this is one chance in a hundred, possibly. But, in any event, um, we, we're very much, uh, interested in the possibility of a direct message to Castro, uh, as well as Khrushchev, might make some sense [redacted] Uh, Mr. Martin* will present you with outline, uh, the kind of, uh, message to Castro that, uh, we had in mind.

Martin: This would be an oral note, message through a third party. Uh, first uh, describing just what we know about what exists in th-, the missile sites, so that he knows that we are informed about what's going on. Uh, second, to point out that the issues this raises as far as the U.S. security is concerned, it's a breach of two of the points that you have made public. Uh, first, the ground-to-ground missile, and, second, obviously, it's a Soviet-operated base in Cuba. Uh, thirdly, this raises the greatest problems for Castro, as we see it. In the first place, uh, by this action the Soviets have, uh, threatened him with attack from the United States, and, uh, therefore the overthrow of his regime; used his territory to, uh, make this, uh, to put him in this jeopardy. And, secondly, the Soviets are talking to other people about the possibility of bargaining this support and these missiles, uh, against concessions in Berlin and elsewhere, and therefore are threatening to, to bargain

*Edwin M. Martin.

him away. Uh, in these circumstances, we wonder whether he, uh, realizes the, the position that, uh, he's been put in and the way the Soviets are using him.

Then go on to say that, uh, we will have to inform our people of the threat that exists here, and we mean to take action about it in the next day or so. And we'll have to do this unless we receive word from him that he is prepared to take action to get the Soviets out of the site. Uh, he will have to show us that not only by statements, privately or publicly, but, uh, by action; that we intend to, uh, keep close surveillance by overflights of the site to make su-, to know what is being done. But we will have to know that he is doing something to remove this threat, uh, in order to withhold the action that we intend to, we will be compelled to take.

Uh, if, uh, Castro feels that an attempt by him to take the kind of action that we're suggesting to him, uh, would result in serious difficulties for him within Cuba, we at least want him to know that, uh, er, to, and to convey to him and remind him of the statement that you, Mr. President, made a year and a half ago in effect that there are two points that are non-negotiable. One is the Soviet tie and presence, and the second is aggression in Latin America. This is a, a hint, but no more than that, that, uh, we might have sympathy and help for him in case he ran into trouble trying to throw the old-line Communists and the Soviets out.

Rusk: Yes.

Martin: We'll give him twenty-four hours to respond.

Rusk: The disadvantage in that is, of course, the, uh, the advance notice if he judges that we, we would not in this, in such approach here say exactly what we would do, but, uh, it might, of course, lead him to bring up mobile anti-aircraft weapons around these, uh, missiles themselves, uh, or, uh, take some other action that will make the strike that more difficult. Um, but there is that, there is that [move that?].

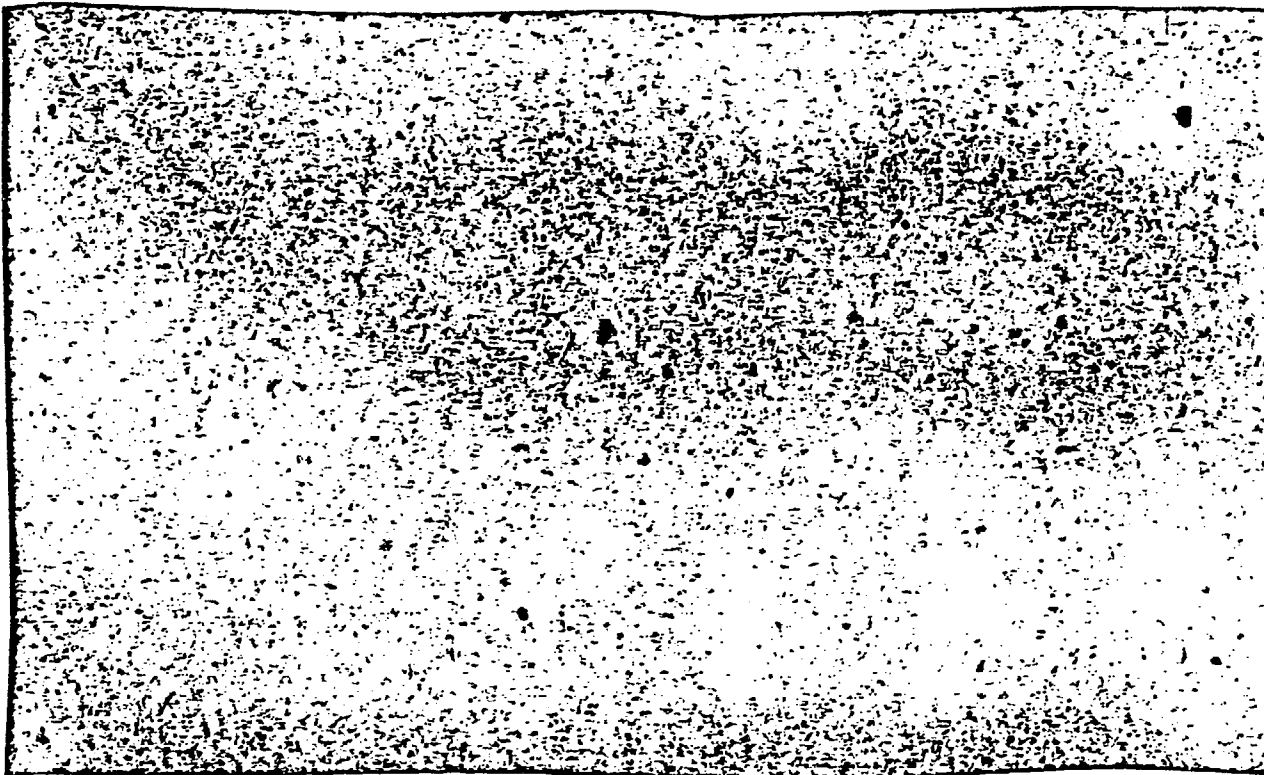
There are two other problems that we are concerned about. Uh, if we strike these missiles, we would expect, I think, uh, maximum Communist reaction in Latin America. In the case of about six of those governments, unless the heads of government had some intimation, uh, requiring some preparatory steps from the security point of view, uh, one or another of those governments could easily, uh, could easily be overthrown--
uh, and therefore,
uh, uh, the question will arise as to whether we should not somehow, uh, indicate to them in some way the seriousness of the situation so they can take precautionary steps, whether we tell them exactly what we have in mind or, or not.

The other is the NATO problem. Um, we, uh, we would estimate that

the Soviets, uh, would almost certainly take, uh, some kind of action somewhere. Um, for us to, to take an action of this sort without letting, uh, our closer allies know of a matter which could subject them to very great, uh, danger, uh, is a very, uh, far-reaching decision to make. And, uh, we could find ourselves, uh, isolated and the alliance crumbling, very much as it did for a period during the Suez affair, but at a moment of much greater danger over an issue of much greater danger than the Suez affair, for the alliance. I think that these are matters that we'll be working on very hard this evening, but I think I ought to mention them because it's, uh, necessarily a part of this problem.

JFK: Can we get a little idea about what the military thing is? Well, of course, one, would you suggest taking these out?

McNamara:

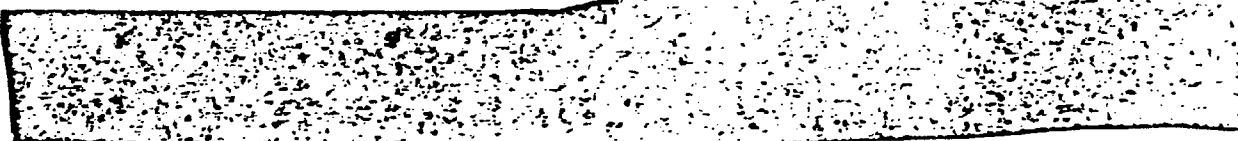


JFK: That would be taking out these three missile sites, uh, plus all the MIGs?

McNamara: Well, you can go from the three missile sites to the three missile sites plus the MIGs, to the three missile sites plus MIGs plus nuclear storage plus airfields and so on up through the offensive, potential offensive [words unintelligible] . . .

JFK: Just the three missiles, however, would be?

McNamara:



JFK: Of course, all you'd really get there would be. . . . What would

you get there? You'd get the, probably you'd get the missiles themselves that are, have to be on the . . .

McNamara: You'd get the launchers . . .

JFK: . . . [words unintelligible].

McNamara: . . . the launchers and the missiles on the [words unintelligible]
. . .

JFK: The launchers are just what? They, they're not much are they?

McNamara: No, they're simply a mobile launchers, uh, device.

Taylor: This is a point target, Mr., uh, President. You're never sure of having, absolutely of getting everything down there. We intend to do a great deal of damage because we can [words unintelligible]. But, as the secretary says here, there was unanimity among all the commanders involved in the Joint Chiefs, uh, that in our judgment, it would be a mistake to take this very narrow, selective target because it invited reprisal attacks and it may be detrimental. Now if the, uh, Soviets have been willing to give, uh, nuclear warheads to these missiles, there is every, just as good reason for them to give nuclear capability to these bases. We don't think we'd ever have a chance to take 'em again, so that we lose this, the first strike surprise capability. Our recommendation would be to get complete intelligence, get all the photography we need, the next two or three days, no, no hurry in our book. Then look at this target system. If it really threatens the United States, then take it right out with one hard crack.

JFK: That would be taking out the, uh, some of those fighters, bombers and . . .

Taylor: Fighters, the bombers, uh, IL-28s may turn up in this photography. It's not that all unlikely there're some there.

JFK: Think you could do that in one day?

Taylor:



McNamara: Mr. President, could I outline three courses . . .

JFK?: [Yes?].

McNamara: . . . of action we have considered and speak very briefly on each one? The first is what I would call the political course of action, in which we, uh, follow some of the possibilities that Secretary Rusk mentioned this morning by approaching Castro, by approaching Khrushchev, by discussing with our allies. An overt and open approach politically to the problem [attempting, or in order?] to solve it. This seemed to me likely to lead to no satisfactory result, and it almost stops subsequent military action.

A second course of action we haven't discussed but lies in between the military course we began discussing a moment ago and the political course of action is a course of action that would involve declaration of open surveillance; a statement that we would immediately impose an, uh, a blockade against offensive weapons entering Cuba in the future; and an indication that with our open-surveillance reconnaissance which we would plan to maintain indefinitely for the future,

Bundy:

McNamara:

But the third course of action is any one of these variants of military action directed against Cuba, starting with an air attack against the missiles. The Chiefs are strongly opposed to so limited an air attack. But even so limited an air attack is a very extensive air attack. It's not twenty sorties or fifty sorties or a hundred sorties, but probably several hundred sorties. Uh, we haven't worked out the details. It's very difficult to do so when we lack certain intelligence that we hope to have tomorrow or the next day. But it's a substantial air attack.

This is the very, very rough plan that the Chiefs have outlined, and it is their judgment that that is the type of air attack that should be carried out.

It seems to me almost certain that any one

of these forms of direct military action will lead to a Soviet military response of some type some place in the world. It may well be worth the price. Perhaps we should pay that. But I think we should recognize that possibility, and, moreover, we must recognize it in a variety of ways. We must recognize it by trying to deter it, which means we probably should alert SAC, probably put on an airborne alert, perhaps take other s-, alert measures. These bring risks of their own, associated with them. It means we should recognize that by mobilization. Almost certainly, we should accompany the initial air strike with at least a partial mobilization. We should accompany an, an invasion following an air strike with a large-scale mobilization; a very large-scale mobilization, certainly exceeding the limits of the authority we have from Congress requiring a declaration therefore of a national emergency. We should be prepared, in the event of even a small air strike and certainly in the event of a larger air strike, for the possibility of a Cuban uprising, which would force our hand in some way. Either force u-, us to accept a, a, uh, an unsatisfactory uprising, with all of the adverse comment that result; or would, would force an invasion to support the uprising.

Rusk: Mr. President, may I make a very brief comment on that? I think that, um, uh, any course of action involves heavy political involvement. Um, it's going to affect all sorts of policies, positions, uh, as well as the strategic situation. So I don't think there's any such thing as a nonpolitical course of action. I think also that, um, uh, we have to consider what political preparation, if any, is to occur before an air strike or in connection with any military action. And when I was talking this morning, I was talking about some steps which would put us in the best position to crack the . . .

JFK: I think the difficulty . . .

Rusk: . . . the strength of Cuba.

JFK: . . . it seems to me, is. . . . I completely agree that there isn't any doubt that if we announced that there were MRBM sites going up that that would change, uh, we would secure a good deal of political support, uh, after my statement; and, uh, the fact that we indicated our desire to restrain, this really would put the burden on the Soviet. On the other hand, the very fact of doing that makes the military. . . . We lose all the advantages of our strike. Because if we announce that it's there, then it's quite obvious to them that we're gonna probably do something about it. I would assume. Now, I don't know, that, it seems to me what we ought to be thinking about tonight is if we made an announcement that the intelligence has revealed that there are, and if we [did the note?] message to Khrushchev. . . . I don't think, uh, that Castro has to know we've been paying much attention to it any more than. . . . Over a period of time, it might have some effect, [have settled?] back down, change. I don't think he plays it that

way. So [have?] a note to Khrushchev. . . . I don't. . . . It seems to me, uh, my press statement was so clear about how we wouldn't do anything under these conditions and under the conditions that we would. He must know that we're going to find out, so it seems to me he just, uh . . .

Bundy: That's, of course, why he's been very, very explicit with us in communications to us about how dangerous this is, and . . .

JFK: That's right, but he's . . .

Bundy: . . . the TASS statement and his other messages.

JFK: He's initiated the danger really, hasn't he? He's the one that's playing [his card, or God?], not us. So we could, uh . . .

Rusk: And his statement to Kohler* on the subject of his visit and so forth, completely hypocritical.

[Reel 1 ends.]

[Reel 2 begins mid-conversation.]

McNamara: . . . Cuba. There is a great possibility they can place them in operational condition quickly. Unless, as General Carter said, the system may have a, a normal reaction time, set-up time of six hours. Whether it has six hours or two weeks, we don't know how much time has started, nor do we know what air-launch capabilities they have for warheads. We don't know what air-launch capability they have for high explosives. It's almost certainly, uh, a, a substantial high-explosive capability in the sense that they could drop one or two or ten high-explosive bombs some place along the East Coast. And that's the minimum risk to this country we run as a result of advance warning, too.

Taylor:

JFK:

Taylor: No, but it certainly is fair to . . .

JFK: . . . if they get one strike.

Dillon: What if they carry a nuclear weapon?

JFK: Well, if they carry a nuclear weapon. . . . You assume they wouldn't do that.

Taylor: [Words unintelligible] I think we would expect some conventional weapon.

Rusk: I would not think that they would use a nuclear weapon unless they're prepared to [join?] a nuclear war, I don't think. I just don't s-, don't, don't see that possibility.

Speaker ?: I would agree.

Bundy?: I agree.

Rusk: That would mean that, uh, we could be just utterly wrong, but, uh, we've never really believed that, that Khrushchev would take on a general nuclear war over Cuba.

Bundy: May I ask a question in that context?

JFK: We certainly have been wrong about what he's trying to do in Cuba. There isn't any doubt about that [possibly a word unintelligible]
...

Bundy: [Words unintelligible] that we've been wrong.

JFK: . . . many of us thought that he was going to put MRBMs on Cuba.

Bundy: Yeah. Except John McCone.

Carter: Mr. McCone.

JFK: Yeah..

Bundy: But, the, uh, question that I would like to ask is, quite aside from what we've said--and we're very hard-locked onto it, I know--What is the strategic impact on the position of the United States of MRBMs in Cuba? How gravely does this change the strategic balance?

McNamara: Mac, I asked the Chiefs that this afternoon, in effect. And they said, substantially. My own personal view is, not at all.

Bundy: Not so much.

McNamara: And, and I think this is an important element here. But it's all very . . .

Carter: The reason our estimators didn't think that they'd put them in there because of . . .

McNamara: That's what they said themselves . . .

Bundy: That's what they said themselves. . . .

McNamara: . . . in TASS statement.

Bundy: Yeah.

Carter: But then, going behind that . . .

JFK: [But why? Did it indicate? Being?] valuable enough?

Bundy: Doesn't prove anything in the strategic balance [overall?].

Carter: Doesn't prove anything. That was what the estimators felt, and that the Soviets would not take the risk. Mr. McCone's reasoning, however, was if this is so, then what possible reason have they got for going into Cuba in the manner in which they are with surface-to-air, uh, missiles and cruise-type missile. He just couldn't understand while their, why the Soviets were so heavily bolstered, bolstering Cuba's defensive posture. There must be something behind it, which led him then to the belief that they must be coming in with MRBMs.

Taylor: I think it was [old-blooded?] . . .

Carter: [Words unintelligible]

Taylor: . . . point of view, Mr. President. You're quite right in saying that these, these are just a few more missiles, uh, targetted on the United States. Uh, however, they can become a, a very, a rather important adjunct and reinforcement to the, to the strike capability of the Soviet Union. We have no idea how far they will go. But more than that, these are, uh, uh, to our nation it means, it means a great deal more. You all are aware of that, in Cuba and not over in the Soviet Union.

Bundy: Well, I ask the question . . .

Taylor: Yeah.

Bundy: . . . with an awareness [laughter?] of the political . . .

JFK: I will say, my understanding's that . . .

Bundy: [Words unintelligible]

JFK: . . . let's just say that, uh, they get, they get these in there and then you can't, uh, they get sufficient capacity so we can't, uh, with warheads. Then you don't want to knock 'em out [cause?], uh, there's too much of a gamble. Then they just begin to build up those air bases there and then put more and more. I suppose they really. . . . Then they start getting ready to squeeze us in Berlin, doesn't that. . . . You may say it doesn't make any difference if you get blown up by an ICBM flying from the Soviet Union or one that was ninety miles away. Geography doesn't mean that much.

Taylor: We'd have to target then with our missiles and have the same kind

of, of pistol-pointed-at-the-head situation as we have in the Soviet Union at the present time.

Bundy:

JFK: That's why it shows the Bay of Pigs was really right. [We've, or We'd?] got it right. That was better and better and worse and worse.

Taylor:

[Faint laughter]

Taylor: [We've changed?] our evaluations well. - - -

RFK: Of course, the other problem is, uh, in South America a year from now. And the fact that you got, uh, these things in the hands of Cubans, here, and then you, say your, some problem arises in Venezuela, er, you've got Castro saying, You move troops down into that part of Venezuela, we're going to fire these missiles.

Taylor: Well, I think you've [words unintelligible].

RFK: I think that's the difficulty . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible].

RFK: . . . rather than the [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible].

RFK: I think it gives the [word unintelligible] image.

JFK: It makes them look like they're coequal with us and that . . .

Dillon: We're scared of the Cubans.

RFK: We let the, uh. . . . I mean like we'd hate to have it in the hands of the Chinese. [Possibly words unintelligible]

Dillon: [Right?] I agree with that sort of thing very strongly.

Martin: It's a psychological factor. It won't reach as far as Venezuela is concerned.

Dillon: Well, that's . . .

McNamara: It'll reach the U.S. though. This is the point.

Speaker ?: That's the point.

Dillon: Yeah. That is the point.

Martin: Yeah. The psychological factor of our having taken it.

Dillon: Taken it, that's the best.

RFK: Well, and the fact that if you go there, we're gonna fire it.

JFK: What's that again, Ed? What are you saying?

Martin: Well, it's a psychological factor that we have sat back and let 'em do it to us, that is more important than the direct threat. Uh, it is a threat in the Caribbean . . .

JFK: [Words unintelligible] I said we weren't going to.

Martin: . . . [words unintelligible].

Bundy?: That's something we could manage.

JFK: Last month I said we weren't going to.

[Laughter]

JFK: Last month I should have said we're . . .

Speaker ?: Well . . .

JFK: . . . that we don't care. But when we said we're not going to and then they go ahead and do it, and then we do nothing, then . . .

Speaker ?: That's right.

JFK: . . . I would think that our risks increase. Uh, I agree. What difference does it make? They've got enough to blow us up now anyway. I think it's just a question of. . . . After all this is a political struggle as much as military. Well, uh, so where are we now? Where is the. . . . Don't think the message to Castro's got much in it. Uh, let's just, uh, let's try to get an answer to this question. How much. . . . It's quite obviously to our advantage to surface this thing to a degree before. . . . First to inform these governments in Latin America, as the secretary suggests; secondly to, uh, the rest of NATO/

Uh, how much does this diminish. . . . Not that we're going to do anything, but the existence of them, without any say about what we're gonna do. Let's say we, twenty-four hours ahead of our doing something about it, we make a public statement that these have been found on the island. That would, that would be notification in a sense that, uh, of their existence, and everybody could draw whatever conclusion they wanted to.

Martin?: I would say this, Mr. President, that I would, that if you've made a public statement, you've got to move immediately, or they, you're going to have a . . .

JFK: Oh, I . . .

Martin?: . . . a [words unintelligible] in this country.

JFK: . . . oh, I understand that. We'll be talking about. . . . Say, say we're going to move on a Saturday and we would say on Friday that these MRBMs, that the existence of this presents the gravest threat to our security and that appropriate action must be taken.

RFK: Could you stick planes over them, until you made the announcement at six o'clock Saturday morning? And at the same time or simultaneously put planes over to make sure that they weren't taking any action or movement, and that you could move in if they started moving in the missiles in place or something, you would move in and knock, that would be the trigger that you would move your planes in and knock them out. Otherwise you'd wait until six o'clock or five o'clock that night. I don't, is that, uh, is that. . . .

Taylor: I don't think anything like that. . . . I can't visualize doing it, uh, doing it successfully that way. I think that, uh, uh, anything that shows, uh, our intent to strike is going to place the airplanes and, and the missiles into, these are por-, really mobile missiles. They can be . . .

RFK: [You mean they can just?] . . .

Taylor: They can pull in under trees and forest and disappear almost at once, as I visualize.

McNamara: And they can also be readied, perhaps, between the time we, in effect, say we're going to come in and the time we do come in. This, this is a very, very great danger to this, this coast. I don't know exactly how to appraise it because . . .

Speaker ?: I don't know.

McNamara: . . . of the readiness period, but it is possible that these are field missiles, and then in that case they can be readied very promptly if they choose to do so.

Carter: These are field missiles, sir. They are mobile-support-type missiles.

Taylor: About a forty-minute countdown, something like that's been estimated.

Ball?: So you would say that, uh, the strike should precede any public discussion?

McNamara: I believe so, yes, if you're going to strike. I think before you make any announcements, you should decide whether you're going to strike. If you are going to strike, you shouldn't make an announcement.

Bundy: That's right.

Dillon: What is the advantage of the announcement earlier? Because it's, it's to build up sympathy or something for doing it; but you get the simultaneous announcement of what was there and why you struck, with pictures and all, I [believe?] would serve the same . . .

Ball?: Well, the only announ-, the only advantage is, it's a kind of ultimatum, it's, there is an opportunity of a response that, which would preclude it. I mean it's, it's more, a more, for, for the appearance than as for the reality. 'Cause obviously you're not going to get that kind of response. But I would suppose that there is a course which is a little different, which is a private message from the president

Martin?:

Ball?: Uh, and, uh, that this is, you're going to have to do this, you're compelled and you've gotta move quickly and you want them to know it. Maybe two hours before the strike, something like that . . .

Dillon: Well, that's it, that's different.

Ball?: . . . even the night before. Uh, but you. . . . But it has to be kept on that basis of total secrecy. And then the question of what you do with these Latin American governments is another matter. I think if you, if you notify them in advance . . .

JFK: That's right. [Indicated?]

Ball?: . . . it may be all over.

JFK: Then you just have to, uh, Congress would, take Congress along . . .

Bundy: I can't. . . . I think that's just not, not right.

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

JFK: I'm not completely, uh, I don't think we ought to abandon just knocking out these missile bases as opposed to, that's much more, uh, defensible, explicable, politically or satisfactory-in-every-way action than the general strike which takes us . . .

Speaker ?: Move down . . .

JFK: . . . us into the city of Havana . . .

Speaker ?: . . . those two.

JFK: . . . and [it is plain to me?] takes us into much more . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

JFK: . . . hazardous, shot down. Now I know the Chiefs say, Well, that means their bombers can take off against us, uh, but, uh . . .

Bundy: Their bombers take off against us, then they have made a general war against Cuba of it, which is a, it then becomes much more their decision. We move this way. . . . The political advantages are, are very strong, it seems to me, of the small strike. Uh, it corresponds to the, the punishment fits the crime in political terms, the we are doing only what we warned repeatedly and publicly we would have to do. Uh, we are not generalizing the attack. The things that we've already recognized and said that we have not found it necessary to attack and said we would not find it necessary to attack . . .

JFK: Well, here's. . . . Let's, look, let's, let's, tonight, it seems to me we ought to go on the assumption that we're going to have the general--number two we've called it . . .

Bundy: Uh-huh.

JFK: . . . course number two, which would be a general strike--that you ought to be in position to do that . . .

Bundy: I agree.

JFK: . . . then if you decide you'd like to do number one.

RFK: How does that in- . . .

JFK: What?

RFK: Does that encompass, uh, an invasion?

JFK: Uh, no, I'd say that's the third course. Let's first start with. . . . I'd have to say first find out, uh, the air, so that I would think that we ought to be in position to do one and two. Which would be. . . . One would be just taking out these missiles, if there were others we'd find in the next twenty-four hours. Number two would be to take out all the airplanes, and number three is invade [here?].

Speaker ?: Well, they'd have to take out the SAM sites . . .

Dillon?: [Words unintelligible] also, Mr. President.

JFK: [Okay?] but that's in, that would be in two, included in number two . . .

Speaker ?: Well . . .

Speaker ?: That's the, that's a terrificly difficult . . .

Dillon: That's a, I mean that's just [words unintelligible]. . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible] that may be three, and invasion four.

Taylor: In order to get in to get the airfields, there's a good number we'd have to [get out?].

Gilpatric?: Well, isn't there a question whether any of the SAM sites are operational?

Taylor?: We're not sure yet.

JFK: Okay, well, let's say we've decided, uh, we've gotta go in the whole way. So let's say that number two is the SAM site plus the air- . . .

Bundy: It's actually to clear the air . . .

JFK: Yeah. Well, whatever it is . . .

Bundy: . . . to win the air battle.

JFK: . . . [words unintelligible]/[to talk over?]. Yeah. Now, it seems to me we ought to be preparing now in the most covered way to do one and two, with the freedom to make the choice about number one depending on what information we have on it, uh, what [word unintelligible] moves that requires, and how much is that gonna . . .

McNamara: Mr. President, it requires no action other than what's been started, and you can make a decision prior to the start Saturday or any time thereafter.

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

JFK: Well, where do we put all these planes?

Taylor: You recall, uh, we have . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible] _____

Taylor: . . . this problem, Mr. President. We're going to get new intelligence that will be coming in from these flights . . .

JFK: Right.

Taylor: . . . and that's gonna be, have to be cranked into the, any strike plans we're preparing, so there is that factor of time. The secretary has given you the, the time, the minimum time is to make a decision, uh, now to, so that we can brief the pilots and then.

crank in the new intelligence. I would point out that, well . . .

McNamara: [The main fact?], to answer the question you asked, we don't have to decide how we're gonna do it. All we have to decide is if we want . . .

Taylor: No.

McNamara: . . . Sweeney* to be prepared to do it.

Taylor: That's correct, the [words unintelligible] . . .

McNamara: And Sweeney has said that he will take the tape that comes in tomorrow and process it Thursday and Friday and prepare the mission folders for [word unintelligible] strikes on Saturday or early, every day thereafter.

Taylor: Yes. The point is that we'll have to brief pilots. We're, we're . . .

McNamara: Right.

Taylor: . . . holding, uh, holding that back. And there'll be, oh, would say four hundred pilots will have to go, to be briefed in the course of this. So I'm just saying this is widening the, the whole military scope of this thing very materially, if that's what we're, we're supposed to do at this time.

JFK: Well, now when do we start briefing the pilots?

Taylor:

JFK:

Taylor:

JFK:

Bundy:

Taylor:

McNamara:

Bundy:

McNamara:

*General Walter C. Sweeney, USAF, Commanding General, Tactical Air Command.

Speaker ?: Uh-huh.

McNamara: And the process of preparation will not in itself run the risk of overt disclosure of the preparation.

Bundy?: Doesn't imply briefing, the preparation?

Taylor: Uh, it does but . . .

McNamara: It implies the preparation of mission folders.

Taylor:

JFK:

Taylor:

JFK:

Taylor:

McNamara:

Speaker:

McNamara:

JFK:

McNamara:

Mr. President, we need to do two things, it seems to me. First, we need to develop a specific strike plan limited to the missiles and the nuclear storage sites, which we have not done. This would

be a part of the broader plan . . .

JFK: Yeah.

McNamara: . . . but I think we ought to estimate the minimum number of sorties. Since you've indicated some interest in that possibility, we ought to provide you that option. We haven't done this.

JFK: Okay.

McNamara: But that's an easy job to do. The second thing we ought to do, it seems to me as a government, is to consider the consequences. I don't believe we have considered the consequences . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

McNamara: . . . of any of these actions satisfactorily, and because we haven't considered the consequences, I'm not sure we're taking all the action we ought to take now to minimize those. I, I don't know quite what kind of a world we live in after we've struck Cuba, and we, we've started it. We've put let's say

[REDACTED] You have, you have, uh, uh, twenty-four objects. Well, you have twenty-four, you have twenty-four, uh, laun-, uh, vehicles, plus, uh, sixteen launchers, plus a possible nuclear storage site, but there's the absolute minimum that you would wish to kill.

Taylor: And you'll miss some.

McNamara: And you'll miss some. That's right. Now after we've launched [REDACTED] sorties, what kind of a world do we live in? How, how do we stop at that point? I don't know the answer to this. I think tonight State and we ought to work on the consequences of any one of these courses of actions, consequences which I don't believe are entirely clear . . .

Ball: With . . .

McNamara: . . . to any of us.

Ball: . . . at any place in the world.

McNamara: At any place in the world, George. That's right. I agree with you.

Taylor: [REDACTED]

JFK: Yeah, but I, I think the only thing is the, the, uh, chances of it becoming a much broader struggle are increased as you step up the, uh. . . . Talk about the dangers to the United States, uh . . .

Bundy: Yeah.

JFK: . . . once you get into, uh, beginning to shoot up those airports, then you get in, you get a lot of anti-aircraft, and you got a lot of, I mean you're running a much more major operation, therefore the dangers of the world-wide effects are substantial to the United States are increased. That's the only argument for it. I quite agree that the, if [you're? or we're?] just thinking about Cuba, the best thing to do is to be bold if you're thinking about trying to get this thing under some degree of, uh, control.

Rusk?: In that regard, Mr. President, there is a combination of the plans which might be considered, namely the limited strike and then the messages, or simultaneously the messages to Khrushchev and Castro, which would indicate to them that this was none other than simply the, fulfilling the statements we've made all along.

JFK: Well, I think we. . . . In other words, that's a matter we've gotta think about tonight.

Speaker ?: Well . . .

JFK:

[laughter]

JFK:

Martin?:

Taylor:

trying to eliminate as effectively as possible every weapon that can strike the United States.

JFK: But you're not for the invasion?

Taylor: I would not at this moment [words unintelligible].

McNamara: This is why . . .

Taylor: [Words unintelligible] we get committed to the, to the degree that

Taylor: Noth-, nothing permanent about it.

RFK: Uh, the, what, where are we six months from now? Or that we're in any better position, or aren't we in worse position if we go in and knock 'em out and say, uh . . .

Speaker ?: [We sure are?]

RFK: . . . Don't do it. Uh, I mean, obviously they're gonna have to do it then.

McNamara: You have to put a blockade in following any . . .

Speaker ?: Sure.

McNamara: . . . limited action.

RFK: Then we're gonna have to sink Russian ships.

McNamara?: Right.

RFK: Then we're gonna have to sink . . .

McNamara?: Right.

RFK: . . . Russian submarines. Now whether it wouldn't be, uh, the argument, if you're going to get into it at all, uh, whether we should just get into it and get it over with and say that, uh, take our losses, and if we're gonna . . . If he wants to get into a war over this, uh. . . . Hell, if it's war that's gonna come on this thing, or if he sticks those kinds of missiles in, it's after the warning, and he's gonna, and he's gonna get into a war for, six months from now or a year from now, so. . . .

McNamara: Mr. President, this is why I think tonight we ought to put on paper the alternative plans and the probable, possible consequences thereof in a way that State and Defense could agree on, even if we, uh, disagree and put in both views. Because the consequences of these actions have not been thought through clearly. The one that the attorney general just mentioned is illustrative of that.

JFK: If the, uh, it doesn't increase very much their strategic, uh, strength, why is it, uh, can any Russian expert tell us why they After all Khrushchev demonstrated a sense of caution [thousands?] . . .

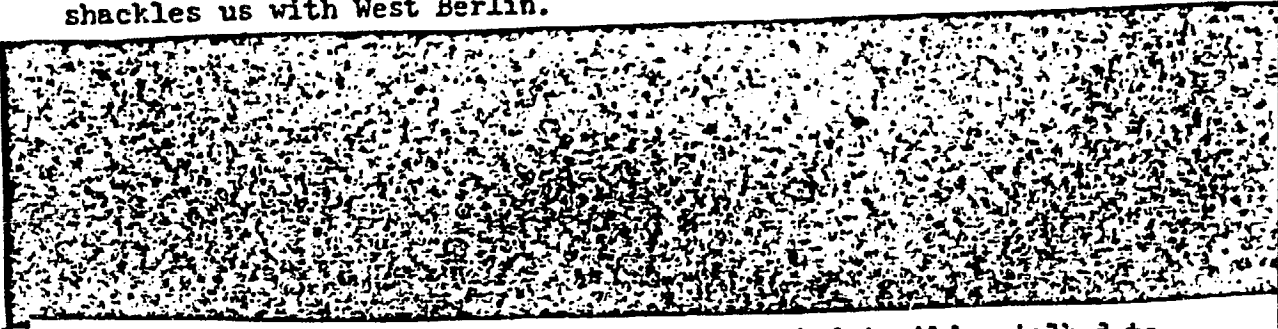
Speaker ?: Well, there are several, several possible . . .

JFK: . . . Berlin, he's been cautious, I mean, he hasn't been, uh . . .

Ball?: Several possibilities, Mr. President. One of them is that he has given us word now that he's coming over in November to, to the UN. If, he may be proceeding on the assumption, and this lack of

shackles us with West Berlin.

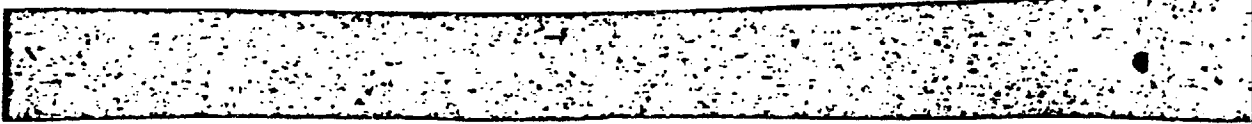
McNamara:



Martin:

[Well?] in this morning's discussion we went into this, talked to some of your people, I believe, a little bit, and we felt an air strike, even of several days, against a military targets primarily, would not result in any substantial unrest. People would just stay home and try to keep out of trouble.

McNamara:



JFK:

[Words unintelligible]

McNamara:

. . . a damned expensive target system.

Taylor:

That was in number [word unintelligible], Mr. Secretary . . .

McNamara:

Yeah.

Taylor:

. . . but that's not the one I recommended.

McNamara:

Well, neither is the one I'd recommend.

JFK:

What does that include, every anti-aircraft gun, or what does that include?

McNamara:

Yeah, uh . . .

Taylor:

This includes [related?] defenses, all sorts of things.

McNamara:



Taylor:

McNamara:

RFK:

Mr. President, while we're considering this problem tonight, I think that we should also consider what, uh, Cuba's going to be a year from now, or two years from now. Assume that we go in and knock these sites out, uh, I don't know what's gonna stop them from saying, We're gonna build the sites six months from now, bring 'em in . . .

a sense of apparent urgency would seem to, to support this, that this isn't going to be discovered at the moment and that, uh, when he comes over this is something he can do, a ploy. That here is Cuba armed against the United States, or possibly use it to try to trade something in Berlin, saying he'll disarm Cuba if, uh, if we'll, uh, yield some of our interests in Berlin and some arrangement for it. I mean, that this is a, it's a trading ploy.

Bundy: I would think one thing that I would still cling to is that he's not likely to give Fidel Castro nuclear warheads. I don't believe that has happened or is likely to happen.

JFK: Why does he put these in there though?

Bundy: Soviet-controlled nuclear warheads [of the kind?] . . .

JFK: That's right, but what is the advantage of that? It's just as if we suddenly began to put a major number of MRBMs in Turkey. Now that'd be goddam dangerous, I would think.

Bundy?: Well, we did, Mr. President.

U.A.Johnson?: We did it. We . . .

JFK: Yeah, but that was five years ago.

U.A.Johnson?: . . . did it in England; that's why we were short.

JFK: What?

U.A.Johnson?: We gave England two when we were short of ICBMs.

JFK: Yeah , but that's, uh . . .

U.A.Johnson?: [Testing?]

JFK: . . . that was during a different period then.

U.A.Johnson?: But doesn't he realize he has a deficiency of ICBMs, needs a PR capacity perhaps, in view of. . . . He's got lots of MRBMs and this is a way to balance it out a bit?

Bundy?: I'm sure his generals have been telling him For a year and a half that he had, was missing a golden opportunity to add to his strategic capability.

Ball?: Yes, I think, I think you, you look at this possibility that this is an attempt to, to add to his strategic capabilities. A second consideration is that it is simply a trading ploy, that he, he wants this in so that he could, he could [words unintelligible]
. . . .

Bundy?: [A prime consistent to his?]/[words unintelligible] . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible] it means if he can't trade, he's still got the other.

[Several speakers speak at once and only a few words are intelligible.]

Speaker ?: And so . . .

Speaker ?: But [words unintelligible] . . .

Speaker ?: . . . the political impact in Latin America.

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible] the source [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible] up front?

Speaker ?: Sure. Sure.

U.A.Johnson?: We are now considering these then Soviet missiles, a Soviet . . .

Speaker ?: I think we ought to.

U.A.Johnson?: . . . offensive capability.

Taylor?: You have to consider them Soviet missiles.

U.A.Johnson?: It seems to me if we go in there, lock-stock-and-barrel, we can consider them entirely Cuban.

Bundy: Ah, well, what we say for political purposes and what we think are not identical here.

Speaker ?: But, I mean, any, any rational approach to this must be that they are Soviet missiles, because I think . . .

Speaker ?: You mean . . .

Speaker ?: . . . Khrushchev himself would never, would never risk a major war on, on a fellow as obviously erratic, uh, and foolish as, as Castro.

Speaker ?: [A sub-lieutenant?]

JFK: Well, now let's say . . .

RFK: Let me say, of course . . .

JFK: Yeah.

RFK: . . . one other thing is whether, uh, we should also think of, uh, uh, whether there is some other way we can get involved in this through, uh, Guantanamo Bay, or something, er, or whether there's some ship that, you know, sink the Maine again or something.

Taylor: We think, Mr. President, that under any of these plans we will

probably get an attack on, on Guantanamo, at least by, by fire. They have artillery and mortars in the, easily within range, and, uh, any of these actions we take we'll have to give air support to Guantanamo and probably reinforce the garrison.

JFK: Well, that's why, uh, it seems to me that, uh, this, if we decide that we are going to be in a position to do this, either one and two Saturday or Sunday, then I would think we would also want to be in a position, depending on [really?] what happens, either because of an invasion, attack on Guantanamo or some other reason to do the inva-, uh, to, to do the eviction.

Taylor: Mr. President, I personally would just urge you not to set a schedule such as Saturday or Sunday . . .

JFK: No, I haven't.

Taylor: . . . until all the intelligence that could be . . .

JFK: That's right. I just wanted, I just wanted, I thought we ought to be moving, I don't want to waste any time though if we decide that, uh, time is not particularly with us. I just think we ought to be ready to do something, even if we decide not to do it. I'm not saying . . .

Taylor: All . . .

JFK: . . . we should do it.

Taylor: . . . all of this is moving, short of the briefing. We've held back, uh . . .

JFK: I understand.

Taylor: . . . we've restricted people to . . .

JFK:

Taylor: I would say that my answer would be largely planning, particularly in the field of mobilization, just what we wan-, uh, what we will, uh, want to recreate after we, uh, [words unintelligible] these forces to Cuba.

Speaker ?: This is [perhaps?] [words unintelligible].

Taylor: I might say that air defense measures we're going to, we're started to take already. We moved more fighters into the southeastern United States and gradually improving some of our, our patrol procedures, uh, under the general guise of, uh, of preparations for that part of the country. We don't think there'd be any, any leaks there that might react against our military targets. I, I'd repeat that

our defenses have always been weak in that part of the country.

JFK: Uh, Mr. Secretary, is there anything that, or any of these contingencies if we go ahead that, uh, the next twenty-four hours--we're going to meet again tomorrow [for this?] in the afternoon--is there anything [words unintelligible] . . .

McNamara: No, sir, I believe that the military planning has been carried on for a considerable period of time, is well under way. And I believe that all the preparations that we could take without the risk of preparations causing discussion and knowledge of this, either among our public or in Cuba, have been taken and are authorized; all the necessary reconnaissance measures are being taken and are authorized. The only thing we haven't done, really, is to consider fully these alternatives.

Bundy: Our principal problem is to try and imaginatively to think . . .

McNamara: Yes.

Bundy: . . . what the world would be like if we do this . . .

McNamara: [I know?]

Bundy: . . . and what it will be like if we don't . . .

McNamara: That's exactly right.

Bundy: . . . if we fail if we do.

McNamara: We ought to work on that tonight.

Ball?: This may be incidental, Mr. President, but if we're going to get the prisoners out this would be a good time to get them out.

JFK: I guess they're not gonna get. . . . Well. . . .

Bundy: You mean take 'em out.

Ball?: No, what I meant was . . .

[Laughter]

Ball?: . . . if we're gonna trade 'em [word unintelligible] . . .

JFK: They're on the Isles of Pines? These prisoners?

RFK: No. Some of them . . .

Speaker ?: [Yes?] sir.

RFK: . . . are. They're split up.

Bundy: [If you can?] get them out alive, I'd make that choice.

JFK: There's no sign of their getting out now, is there? The exchange?

RFK: No, but they will take a few weeks.

JFK: A few weeks.

RFK: [Yeah?] You know they're having that struggle between the young Cuban leaders and the [words unintelligible] . . .

Bundy:

JFK:

Bundy:

JFK:

McNamara: Shouldn't wait for twenty-four hours at least before any [words unintelligible] . . .

RFK: [Words unintelligible]

Bundy:

Speaker ?: Huh?

Bundy: . . . the other ones.

JFK: Mr. Vice President, do you have any thoughts? Between one and two?

L.B.Johnson: I don't think I can add anything [that is essential?].

JFK: The, uh . . .

Speaker ?: There's a . . .

JFK: . . . the, uh, let's see, what time we gonna meet then tomorrow? What is it we want to have by tomorrow from the. . . . We want

to have from the department tomorrow in a little bit more concise form whether there is any kind of a [words unintelligible] we have to give. How much of a [words unintelligible] and, number two, what you think of these various alternatives we've been talking about, if you see there is any use bringing this to Khrushchev in the way of, [for?], for example, do we want to, for ex-, here is Dobrynin now, he's repeated. . . . Uh, I got to go to, uh, see Schroeder.** Let's meet at, uh, eleven to twelve. What time do I get back tomorrow night?

Bundy?: Reasonably [early?].

JFK?: Get back about 7:45.

JFK: We meet here by five. . . .

Bundy: Mr. Secretary, some of the staff are in trouble with the dinner for Schroeder tomorrow night.

JFK: Okay, well, now the. . . . I don't think, I don't know, think we'll have anything by noon tomorrow, do we?

Bundy: Would you want to wait until Thursday morning, Mr. President?

JFK: Looks to me like we might as well. I, I. . . . Uh. Everybody else can meet if they want to, if they need to. The secretary of state, the secretary of defense can . . .

McNamara: I think it'd be very useful to meet or else stay afterwards tonight [words unintelligible]/[for a while?].

Bundy: It would be a great improvement not to have any more intense White House meetings--trouble with all the [words unintelligible] if we could meet at the State Department tomorrow.

[Several speakers speak at once and none of the words are intelligible.]

JFK: All right, then I could meet you, Mac, when I get back tomorrow and just as well, whatever the thing is and then we can meet Thursday morning. I don't. . . . The question is whether, uh. . . . I'm going to see Gromyko*** Thursday and I think the question that I'd really like to have is some sort of a judgment on, is whether we ought to do anything with Gromyko. Whether we ought to say anything to him; whether we ought to, uh, indirectly give him sort of a, give him an ultimatum on this matter, or whether we just ought to go ahead without him. It seems to me that . . .

Speaker ?: In other words . . .

JFK: . . . he said we'd be. . . . The attorney general, the ambassador

*Anatoly F. Dobrynin. **Gerhard Schroeder. ***Andrei A. Gromyko.

told the attorney general, as he told Bohlen* the other day that they were not going to put these weapons there. Now either he's lying or doesn't know. Whether the attorney general saw Dobrynin--not acting as if we had any information about 'em--said that, of course, that they must realize that if this ever does happen that this is going to cause this, give a very clear indication of what's going to happen. Now I don't know what would come out of that, I. . . . Possibly nothing. Possibly, uh, this'd alert them. Possibly they would reconsider their decision, but I don't think we've had any clear evidence of that, and it would give them. . . . We'd lose a week. "

Ball?: You mean tell them that. . . .

JFK: Well, not tell them that we know that they've got it, but merely in the course of a conversation Dobrynin, having said that they would never do it, the attorney general, who sees Dobrynin once in a while, would . . .

Ball?: How would we lose a week?

JFK: What?

Ball?: How would we lose a week?

JFK: Oh, we would be. . . . What we'd be, Bobby would be saying to them, in short, is if these ever come up that we're going to do, the present state would have to take action. And, uh, this [words unintelligible], uh, this could cause [words unintelligible] the most far-reaching consequences. On the possibility that that might cause them to reconsider their action. I don't know whether his, they're aware of what I sai-. . . . I can't understand their viewpoint, if they're aware of what we said at the press conferences I say, I've never. . . . I don't think there's any record of the Soviets ever making this direct a challenge, ever, really . . .

Bundy: We have to be clear, Mr. President . . .

JFK: . . . since the Berlin blockade.

Bundy: . . . that they made this decision, in all probability, before you made your statements.

McNamara: Uh-huh.

Bundy: This is, uh, important element in the calendar.

Dillon: That didn't change it.

Bundy: No. Indeed, they didn't change it, but they, they. . . . It's quite a different thing. There was either a contravenance on

*Charles E. Bohlen.

one . . .

Dillon: Yeah.

Bundy: My, I wouldn't bet a cookie that Dobrynin doesn't know a bean about . . .

Dillon?: Uh-huh.

Bundy: . . . this.

JFK: You think he does know?

RFK: He didn't know.

Bundy: I, I would [words unintelligible] . . .

RFK: He didn't even know that [words unintelligible] in my judgment.

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

Taylor: Why it's, I mean there's evidence of sightings in late August, I think, and early September of, of some sort.

Speaker ?: It seems to me, Mr. President, there's, in your public presentation simultaneous or subsequent to an action, your hand is strengthened somewhat if the Soviets have, uh, lied to you, either privately or in public.

Bundy?: I'll agree to that.

Speaker ?: And then if, or if you, uh, without knowing, if you ask Gromyko, or if Bobby asks Dobrynin again, or if some other country could get the Soviets to say publicly in the UN, No, we have no offensive . . .

RFK: TASS, of course, said they're gonna. . . .

JFK: When did TASS say that?

Speaker ?: A while back.

RFK: . . . said they would send offensive weapons to Cuba.

Bundy: Yeah. The TASS . . .

JFK: Khrushchev say that?

Bundy: . . . statement I read this morning.

RFK?: [Yes?]

Bundy: No, the TASS statement. It's . . .

Speaker ? : We don't know if Khrushchev under control yet.

Speaker ? : Uh.

Bundy: Uh, no, we don't have any detail on that. Soviet . . .

JFK: Well, what about my. . . . What question would be there for what I might say to Gromyko about this matter, if you want me just get in the record . . .

Speaker ? : Uh-huh.

JFK: . . . like asking him whether they plan to do it.

Speaker ? : Well, I think what you get is to . . .

Bundy: Putting it the other way around saying that we are . . .

Speaker ? : . . . call his . . .

Bundy: . . . putting great weight upon the assurances of him . . .

Speaker ? : . . . call the attention to the statement that you've made on this . . .

Speaker ? : Yup.

Speaker ? : . . . this is your public commitment and that, uh, you, you are going to have to, you're gonna abide by this, and you just want assurances from him that, that, uh, they're, they're living up to what they've said, that they're not gonna . . .

JFK: Well, let's say he said, Well, we're not planning to.

Bundy: "The government of the Soviet Union also authorized TASS to state that there is no need for the Soviet Union to shift its weapons for the repulsion of aggression for a retaliatory blow to any other country, for instance, Cuba. Our nuclear weapons are so powerful in their explosive force, the Soviet Union has so powerful rockets to carry those nuclear warheads that there is no need to search for" . . .

JFK: [I see?]

Bundy: . . . "sites for them beyond the boundaries of the Soviet Union."

JFK: Well, what date was that?

Bundy: September eleventh.

Speaker ? : [Words unintelligible]

Dillon: When they were all there.

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible] certainly on the way.

JFK: But isn't that. . . . But, as I say, we have to. . . . We never really ever had a case where it's been quite this, uh. . . . After all, they backed down in, uh, Chinese Communists in '58. They didn't go into Laos. Agreed to a ceasefire there.

[Several speakers speak at once and many of the words are unintelligible.]

Bundy: We had this trouble . . .

JFK?: They backed up . . .

Bundy: . . . at [words unintelligible] where they . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

JFK?: [What's?] . . .

Bundy: . . . nuclear storage site.

Speaker ?: At least.

Bundy: Yeah. It's very clear..

JFK: What?

Bundy: I'm as puzzled as Bob is by the absence of a nuclear storage site.

Taylor: We don't know enough about it yet and we [words unintelligible] . .

Bundy: I understand that. We may learn a lot overnight.

Speaker ?: Isn't it puzzling, also, there are no evidence of any troops protecting the sites?

Taylor: Well, there're troops there. At least there're tents . . .

[Several speakers speak at once and many of the words are unintelligible.]

Speaker ?: [A few campers?][words unintelligible].

Taylor: . . . [presumably they have some personnel?].

McNamara?: But they look like [words unintelligible]. It's as if you could walk over the fields into those vans. [I agree?]

JFK: Well, it's a goddamn mystery to me.

McNamara?: [Words unintelligible]

JFK: I don't know enough about the Soviet Union, but if anybody can tell me any other time since the Berlin blockade where the

Russians have given us so clear provocation, I don't know when it's been, because they've been awfully cautious really. The Russians, I never. . . . Now, maybe our mistake was in not saying some time before this summer that if they do this we're [word unintelligible] to act. Maybe they'd gone in so far [that?] it's. . . .

RFK: Yeah, but then why did they put that statement in it?

JFK: Perhaps it. . . .

Speaker ?: That's it [words unintelligible] . . .

JFK: This was following my statement, wasn't it?

RFK: September eleventh.

Taylor: Quick ground [words unintelligible].

JFK: When was my statement? What?

Taylor:

Speaker ?: No, this is two days before your statement.

Carter: Uh, we can try it, but your problems about exfiltration and your problems with training an individual as to what to look for are not handled in twenty-four hours.

McNamara: A better way would be to send in a low-flying airplane . . .

Carter: Yes.

McNamara: . . . and we have today put those on alert, but we would recommend against . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

McNamara: . . . using the low-flying planes until shortly before the intention to strike.

Taylor: This was considered by the, by the co-, commanders today, and they're all of that opinion that the, the loss of surprise would there, was more serious than the, the information we'd get from that.

Speaker ?: I would think it would be very valuable to have them go in shortly before the strike, just to build the evidence. I mean, when you've got pictures that really show what you were, what was there.

JFK: Now, with these great demono-, uh, uh, Bohlen and Thompson,* did they have an explanation of why the Russians are sticking a [word unintelligible] by itself?

[Several conversations are going on at once and only the following fragments are intelligible.]

Speaker ?: Take them out . . .

JFK: [Words unintelligible] Acheson** [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?: . . . a little bit later something [words unintelligible]. Yeah.

JFK: What're we going to say up in Connecticut? You expected the [Bentley trial?].

[Laughter]

JFK: This is a jeer for the. . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible] president?

JFK: [Words unintelligible] eight or nine-thirty . . .

Bundy: The cabinet at ten.

JFK: Yeah. I'll just see Tom Mann*** at one.

Bundy: And that's Mann or Sato**** or both?

JFK: Sato.

Speaker ?: Japanese, uh . . .

JFK: Mann ought to know something. Let's have it here at eleven. Rusk at nine-thirty. In fact, they don't even have to come.

Speaker ?: No.

JFK: [Words unintelligible] the cabinet.

Speaker ?: You just. . . .

JFK: We're going to discuss the [words unintelligible] budget. What about Schroeder? Do I have anything we want to say to Schroeder?

Bundy: We, uh, have a lot on that to discuss which, uh, was halfway in early in the morning. I don't think it's very complicated. The big issue that has come up is Schroeder makes a very strong case for refusing visas on the grounds that he thinks that, uh, that would undermine morale in Berlin in a very dangerous way. I think

*Illewellyn E. Thompson, Jr. **Dean G. Acheson. ***Thomas C. Mann. ****Eisaku Sato.

that's the principal issue that's between us.

JFK: I wonder if we could get somebody to give me something about what our position . . .

Bundy: You want that?

JFK: . . . should be on that.

Bundy: Yeah. Very happy to. You want it tonight?

JFK: No, no. Just in the morning.

Speaker ?: Mr. President, at least they're setting up the time . . .

Speaker ?: Yes, Mr. President.

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

JFK: That's very good, General, thank you.

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]/[Thompson here?]

[Several conversations are going on at once and only the following fragments are intelligible.]

McNamara: Where is Reilly going to be?

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

Carter: Mr. McCone is coming in tonight.

McNamara: . . . in Mac's office. I'll get you one. Did you see him?

Carter: Yes. [Words unintelligible]

McNamara: Yeah, I'll go down and see him [words unintelligible].

Carter: I would suggest that we get into this hot water partly because of this.

JFK: Yeah, I want to talk to him in the morning. I'd like to just be briefed [words unintelligible]. Why is that? [Words unintelligible]

Bundy?: He won't be. . . . Does he get back tonight?

Carter: Coming in tonight. Yes, sir. I'm going to get . . .

Bundy?: Then could he come in in the morning?

Carter: [Words unintelligible]

[Several conversations continue at the same time and only the following fragments are intelligible.]

Bundy?: Could he come in then at nine-thirty?

Carter?: Sure.

Speaker ?: [Bob?], [words unintelligible].

McNamara: Could we agree to meet, uh, mid-afternoon?

Speaker ?: Any time you say, Bob.

McNamara: And then, uh, guide our work tonight and tomorrow on that [schedule?]. Why, why don't we say three o'clock? This'll give us some time . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

McNamara: . . . to cover all we've done . . .

Bundy: Yeah.

McNamara: . . . and then do some more tomorrow night if necessary tomorrow afternoon.

Bundy: Would it be [word unintelligible] to make it a little earlier? I ought to get to a four o'clock meeting with Schroeder.

McNamara: [Word unintelligible] said two o'clock, I think, with Schroeder.

Dillon?: Two o'clock.

Bundy: Good.

McNamara: Really plenty of time between [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?: Two o'clock [words unintelligible].

McNamara: [Words unintelligible] At 2:00 P.M. we'll do it at State.

Speaker ?: All right.

McNamara: Now, could we agree what we're gonna do? I would suggest that we, and I don't expect, in fact I . . .

[McNamara and another speaker speak at the same time and none of the words are intelligible.]

McNamara: . . . I would suggest that we, uh, divide the, the, uh, series of targets up by, in effect, numbers of DGZs and, uh, and, uh, numbers of sorties required to take those out for a series of alternatives starting only with the missiles and working up through the nuclear storage sites and the MIGs and the, er, and the SAMs and so on. So we can say, This target system would take so many point, eighty points and so many objects would take

so many sorties to knock out. The, the. . . . Not because I think that these are reasonable alternatives . . .

Bundy?: They're not really going to be realistic, even, but they give us [words unintelligible] . . .

McNamara: . . . but they give an order [words unintelligible] to the president to get some idea of this. And this we can do, and this can be done very easily. But the most important thing we need to do is this appraisal of the world after any one of these situations . . .

Bundy: Sure.

McNamara: . . . in great detail.

Bundy?: That's right.

McNamara: And, and I think probably this is something State would have to do . . .

Speaker ?: [Word unintelligible]

McNamara: . . . and I would strongly urge we put it on paper . . .

Speaker ?: That's right.

McNamara: . . . and we, I'll be happy to stay, or, how, or, uh, look at it early in the morning, or something like that if, in order that we may inject disagreement if we [words unintelligible] . . .

Bundy: What I would suggest is that someone be deputied to, to do a piece of paper which really is what happens. I think the margin is between whether we take out the [missile zone?], or missiles on? strike or take a lot of air bases. This is tactical within a decision to take military action. Now, doesn't, overwhelmingly, it may substantially if it doesn't overwhelmingly change the world. I think any military action does change the world. And I think not taking action changes the world. And I think these are the two worlds that we need to look at.

McNamara: I'm very much inclined to agree, but I think we have to make that point . . .

Bundy: I agree. . .

McNamara: . . . within the military action . . .

Bundy: I agree.

McNamara: . . . a gradation . . .

Bundy: Oh, many graduations and they have major, it can have major effects

McNamara: Yeah.

Bundy: I mean, I don't need to exaggerate that now. The question is how to get ahead with that, and whether, uh, I would think, myself, that it, it, it, the appropriate place to make this preliminary analysis is at the Department of State. I think the rest of us ought to spend the evening really to some advantage separately trying to have our own views of this. And I think we should meet in order, at least, to trade pieces of paper, before two o'clock, uh, tomorrow morning if that's agreeable.

McNamara: Why don't we meet tomorrow morning, and, and with pieces of paper, uh, from State, and this is a h- . . .

Speaker ?: No.

McNamara: . . . maybe you don't feel this is reasonable, but . . .

Speaker ?: No. [Words unintelligible].

McNamara: . . . I, I would strongly urge that tonight State [words unintelligible] . . .

Bundy: Well, who is State's de facto? Is, are, are you all tied up tonight? Or what?

Speaker ?: No, no.

Ball?: Uh, the situation is that the only one who's tied up tonight is, is the secretary and he is coming down at eleven o'clock from his dinner to look at what we will have done in the meantime.

Speaker ?: Alex* is back waiting for him.

Ball?: Oh, good, we'll have Alex, we'll have Tommy.** Well, we've kept . . .

Bundy: Right.

Ball?: . . . this to our, this has, this has been . . .

Bundy: But you have Tommy? I . . .

Speaker ?: Talked to him this afternoon some.

Bundy: Then you're, do you have any, uh. . . . I'd be fascinated by this the first sense of how he sees this.

Ball?: Well, the, the, the argument was really between, uh, Hilsman's*** demonologists, who were already cut in because they [word unintelligible] your boots, who thought this was a low-risk operation. Tommy thought it was a high-risk operation by the Soviets, in

other words they were taking real chances. Other people rather thought that they, they probably had miscalculated us and thought this wasn't a risky operation. You know, on the way they were going at it . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

Ball?: . . . either impatient like the SAM sites hadn't been set up to protect it, the various factors which suggest to them that they didn't think anything was gonna happen. Tommy leaned the other way.

McNamara: Could I suggest that tonight we actually draft a paper and it start this way--just a paragraph or two of, of the knowns. Uh, we have to. . . . The knowns are that the SAMs that are here. Let's say the, the probable knowns, because we're not certain of any of them. The probabilities are the SAM system isn't working today. This is important. The probabilities are that these missiles are not operational today. The probabilities are that they won't be operational in less than X days, although we can't be certain. Pat said two weeks. I'm not so sure I'd put it that far. But I. . . . There's just two or three of these knowns. I would put in there, by the way . . .

Speaker ?: How . . .

McNamara: . . . the number of . . .

Speaker ?: Unprotected.

McNamara: Uh, they're unprotected. Another known I'd put in is that they have about fifty X, uh, MIGs, -15, -17 and -19s; that they have certain crated, uh, I've forgotten, say, ten, er, X crated MIG-21s, only one of which we believe to have been assembled. They have X crated IL-28s, none of which we believe to have been assembled. These, this is, in a sense, the problem we, we face there.

Bundy: Do you believe State or the agencies should state the military knowns?

McNamara: Well, this. . . . I can sta- . . .

Speaker ?: I think . . .

McNamara: . . . we can do this in just ten seconds . . .

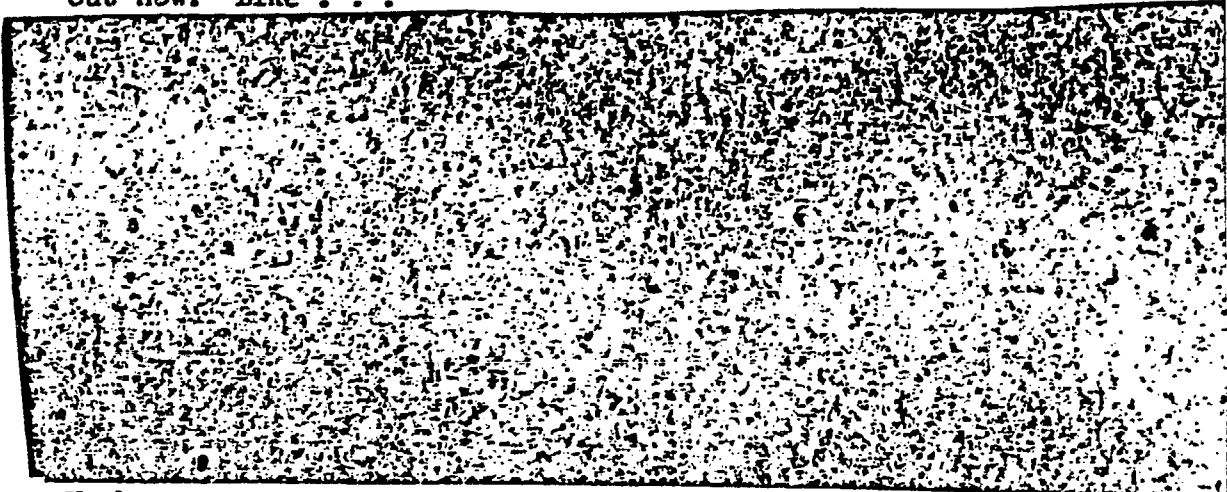
Speaker ?: Yeah.

McNamara: . . . a very, very simple . . .

Speaker ?: Yeah.

McNamara: . . . statement I think. But then I would follow that by the, the alternatives of, not all of them but the more likely alternatives that we consider open to us. And would hope we could stay just a second here and see if we could sketch them out now. Like . . .

Bundy:



Speaker ?: Yeah.

Bundy: I think there's an enormous political advantage, myself, within these options, granting that all the Chiefs didn't fully agree, taking out the thing that gives the trouble and not the thing that doesn't give the trouble.

McNamara?: This, as opposed to, uh, is it an air attack on . . .

Bundy: Supplementary to an air attack. I mean, how're you gonna know that you've got 'em? And if you haven't got 'em, what've you done?

Taylor: Well, this, this, of course, raises the question of having gotten this set, what happens to the set that arrives next week?

McNamara: Oh, I, I think the ans- . . .

Taylor: Yeah.

McNamara: . . . I, let me answer Mac's question first. How do we know we've got them? We will have photo recon [militarily?] with the strike. Sweeney specifically plans this, and . . .

Bundy: Proving a negative is a hell of a job.

McNamara: Pardon me?

Bundy: Proving a negative is a hell of a job.

Taylor:



Bundy: That's true.

McNamara: Terrible risk to put them in there, uh. . . .

Bundy: I ag-, I think the [words unintelligible] is probably a bad idea, but it . . .

McNamara: I think the risk troubles me, it's too great in relation to the risk of not knowing whether we get them.

Bundy: Well . . .

McNamara: But, in any case, this is a small variant of one . . .

Bundy: That's right, it's a minor . . .

McNamara: . . . of the plans.

Bundy: . . . variant of one plan.

McNamara: It seems to me that there are some major alternatives here that I don't think we discussed them fully enough today, and I'd like to see them laid on the paper, if State agrees. The first is what I, I still call it the political approach. Uh, let me say it a nonmilitary action.

[laughter]

McNamara: It doesn't start with one and it isn't gonna end with one.

Speaker ?: Yeah.

McNamara: And I, for that reason I call it a political approach.

Speaker ?: Right . . .

McNamara: And I say it isn't gonna end with one because once you start this political approach, I don't think you're gonna have any opportunity for a military operation.

Speaker ?: I agree.

Taylor: It becomes very difficult.

McNamara: But at least I think we ought to put it down there, uh.

Taylor: Right.

Bundy: And it should be worked out. I mean what, what is the maximum . .

Speaker ?: Your ride is waiting downstairs [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?: Very good, thank you [words unintelligible].

McNamara: Yeah, it should, should definitely be worked out. What, exactly what does it in-, involve, and what are the chances of success of it? They're not zero. They're plus I think.

Taylor?: We did an outline this morning along these lines.

McNamara: All right. That, that's [word unintelligible] anyway . . .

Bundy: Um, but, do you see, it's, it's not just the chances of success, it's the, it ought to be examined in terms of the pluses and minuses of, of nonsuccess . . .

McNamara: Yes. Yes.

Bundy: . . . because there is such a thing as making this thing pay off in ways that are . . .

McNamara: Yeah. Yeah.

Bundy: . . . are of some significance, even though we don't act . . .

McNamara: Yeah. I completely agree.

Bundy: . . . or go with that.

McNamara: And, and this is my second alternative in . . .

Bundy: Yeah.

McNamara: . . . particular and I want to come to that in a moment. But the first one I . . .

Bundy: Yeah.

McNamara: . . . I completely agree it isn't. I, I phrased it improperly. Not the chances of success. It's the results . . .

Speaker ?: [words unintelligible]

McNamara: . . . that [we're calling? or causing?] . . .

Bundy: Yep.

McNamara: . . . for the mankind.

Bundy: Yep.

McNamara: Now, the second alternative, I, I'd like to discuss just a second, because we haven't discussed it fully today, and I alluded it to, to it a moment ago. I, I, I'll be quite frank. I don't think there is a military problem here. This is my answer to Mac's question . . .

Bundy: That's my honest [judgment?].

McNamara: . . . and therefore, and I've gone through this today, and I asked myself, Well, what is it then if it isn't a military problem?

Well, it's just exactly this problem, that, that, uh, if Cuba should possess a capacity to carry out offensive actions against the U.S., the U.S. would act.

Speaker ?: That's right.

Speaker ?: That's right.

McNamara: Now, it's that problem, this . . .

Speaker ?: You can't get around that one.

McNamara: . . . this, this is a domestic, political problem. The announcement- we didn't say we'd go in and not, and kill them, we said we'd act. Well, how will we act? Well, we want to act to prevent their use, and it's really the . . .

Bundy: Yeah.

McNamara: . . . the act. Now, how do we pre-, act to prevent their use? Well, first place, we carry out open surveillance, so we know what they're doing. All times. Twenty-four hours a day from now and forever, in a sense indefinitely. What else do we do? We prevent any further offensive weapons coming in. In other words we blockade offensive weapons.

Bundy: How do we do that?

McNamara: We search every ship.

Taylor: There're two kinds of, of blockade: a blockade which stops ships from coming in and, and simply a seizure, I mean a, simply a search.

McNamara: A search, that's right . . .

Taylor?: Yeah.

McNamara: . . . and . . .

Speaker ?: Well, it would be a search and removal if found.

Bundy: You have to make the guy stop to search him, and if he won't stop, you have to shoot, right?

Speaker ?: All [word unintelligible] up . . .

Speaker ?: And you have to remove what you're looking for if you find it.

Speaker ?: That's right.

McNamara: Absolutely. Absolutely. And then an ul-, I call it an ultimatum associated with these two actions is a statement to the world,

particularly to Khrushchev, that we have located these offensive weapons; we're maintaining a constant surveillance over them; if there is ever any indication that they're to be launched against this country, we will respond not only against Cuba, but we will respond directly against the Soviet Union with, with a full nuclear strike. Now this alternative doesn't seem to be a very acceptable one, but wait until you work on the others.

Bundy: That's right.

[laughter]

McNamara: This is the, this is the problem, but I've thought something about the others this afternoon.

Speaker ?: He's right.

Ball?: Bob, let me ask you one thing that seems slightly irrelevant. What real utility would there be in the United States if we ever actually captured one of these things and could examine it and take it apart?

McNamara: Not very much. No. No.

Ball?: Would we learn anything about the . . .

McNamara: No, no.

Ball?: . . . technology that would be meaningful?

McNamara: I don't [words unintelligible]. Pat may . . .

Carter: I don't think so.

McNamara: . . . disagree with [me?], but I. . . .

Speaker ?: Yeah.

McNamara: Well, in any case, that's an alternative. I'd like to see it expressed and discussed.

Ball?: Of course, if, if it takes two hours to screw a head on as a guy said this morning, two to four hours . . .

McNamara: Oh, by the way, that should be one of the knowns in this

Ball?: Yeah.

McNamara: . . . initial paragraph.

Bundy?: That's right.

Ball?: . . . uh, they got all night. How're you gonna survey 'em

during the night? Uh, I mean, it seems to me that they're some gaps in the surveillance.

McNamara: Oh, well, it's really the, yes, it isn't the surveillance, it's the ultimatum that is . . .

Ball?: Yeah.

McNamara: . . . the key part in this.

Ball?: Yeah.

McNamara: And really what I tried to do was develop a little package that meets the action requirement of that paragraph I read.

Speaker ?: Yeah.

McNamara: Because, as I suggested, I don't believe it's primarily a military problem. It's primarily a, a domestic, political problem.

Ball: Yeah, well, as far as the American people are concerned, action means military action, period.

McNamara: Well, we have a blockade. Search and, uh, removal of, of offensive weapons entering Cuba. Uh, [word unintelligible] again, I don't want to argue for this . . .

Ball: No, no, I . . .

McNamara: . . . because I, I don't think it's . . .

Ball: . . . I think it's an alternative.

McNamara: . . . a perfect solution by any means. I just want to . . .

Bundy: Which one are we [still on?] would you say?

McNamara: Still on the second one, uh . . .

Ball: Now, one of the things we look at is whether any, the actual operation of a blockade doesn't, isn't a greater involvement almost than a . . .

McNamara: Might well be, George.

Ball: . . . military action.

Speaker ?: I think so.

McNamara: It's, it's a search, not a, not an embargo, uh. . . .

Speaker ?: Yeah.

Ball: It's a series of single, unrelated acts, not by surprise. This, uh, come in there on Pearl Harbor just frightens the hell out of me as to what's going beyond. [Yeah, well, anyway?] the Board of National Estimates have been working on this ever since . . .

Bundy: What, what goes, what goes beyond what?

Ball: What happens beyond that. You go in there with a surprise attack. You put out all the missiles. This isn't the end. This is the beginning, I think. There's a whole hell of a lot of things . . .

Bundy: Are they all working on powerful reaction in your [word 'unintelligible']?

Carter: Yes, sir.

Bundy: Good.

Ball: . . . which goes back down to, uh, Mr. Secretary, is this the central . . .

Bundy: Yeah.

Ball: . . . point of, to connect . . .

[Two conversations are going on at once. Only these fragments are intelligible.]

McNamara: Well, that, that takes me into the third category of action. I'd lump them all in the third category. I call it overt military action of varying degrees of intensity, ranging. . . . And, if you feel there's any difference in them, in the kind of a world we have after the varying degrees of intensity . . .

Speaker ?: Right.

McNamara: . . . you have to divide category three into subcategories by intensity and probable effect on the world thereafter. And I think there is, at least in the sense of the Cuban uprising, which I happen to believe is a most important element of category three, it applies to some elements in category three, but not all. But, in any event, what, what kind of a world do we live in? In Cuba what action do we take? What do we expect Castro will be doing after, uh, you attack these missiles? Does he survive as a, as a political leader? Is he overthrown? Uh, is he stronger, weaker? Uh, how will he react? How will the Soviets react? What can. . . . How, how could Khrushchev afford to accept this action without some kind of rebuttal? I don't think, he can't accept it without some rebuttal. It may not be a substantial rebuttal, but it's, it's gonna have to be some. Where? How do we react in relation to it? What happens when we do mobilize? How does this affect our allies' support of us in relation to Berlin? Well, you know far better than I the problems, uh, but it would seem to me if we could lay

this out tonight and then meet a reasonable time in the morning to go over a tentative draft, discuss it, and then have another draft for some time in the afternoon . . .

Gilpatric?: One kind of planning, Bob, that, uh, that, uh, we didn't explicitly talk about today, uh, which is to look at the points of vulnerability around the world, not only in Berlin . . .

McNamara: Sure.

Gilpatric?: . . . not only in Turkey . . .

McNamara: Sure. Iran.

Gilpatric?: Iran and all of them . . .

McNamara: And Korea.

Gilpatric?: What, what precautionary measures ought to be taken?

McNamara: Yes. Yes.

Gilpatric?: Well, these, this, these are, these are both military and political . . .

McNamara: Exactly. Well, uh, and we call it a world-wide alert . . .

Speaker ?: [Yeah?]

McNamara: . . . under that heading we've got a whole series of precautionary measures that we, we think, uh, should be taken. All of our forces should be put on alert, but beyond that, mobilization, redeployment, movement, and so on. . . . Well, would it be feasible to meet at some time in the morning, uh, that's . . .

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

McNamara: . . . [words unintelligible]? Mac, what would you think?

Bundy: I ought to, uh, join the president for the meeting with Schroeder and I'll be involved in getting some, started for that until ten o'-, uh, from about nine-thirty on. I could be, meet any time before that.

Speaker ?: Well, why don't we take the [words unintelligible]? . . .

Carter: Well now, the president was going to see Mr. McCone at nine-thirty.

Bundy: That's right.

McNamara: Well, why don't we meet at eight-thirty? Is that . . .

Bundy: [Fine?]

McNamara: Let's, let's try that.

Bundy: Okay.

Speaker ?: Well you want. . . . Is [Halberstam?] coming?

McNamara: Now, there's not much we can do to help, uh, I'd be happy to, though . . .

Speaker ?: No. [Words unintelligible].

McNamara: . . . if you think of anything we can do. We'll, we'll go to work tonight and get these numbers of sorties by target systems laid out. I'll, Reilly's up in Mac's office and I'll go down there now and get them started on it.

Carter: I think Mr. McCone could be helpful to you all in the morning.

McNamara: Well, I think he should try to stay here at eight-thirty.

Speaker ?: Yeah.

Carter: He didn't worry about this for a heck of a long time . . .

Bundy: Sure.

Carter: . . . [word unintelligible] some.

[Meeting appears to be breaking up. Only the following fragments of conversation are intelligible.]

McNamara: Yeah.

Speaker ?: We can meet while [words unintelligible].

Speaker ?: Yeah.

Speaker ?: Are you going to be dining tonight? Or whatever it was you [word unintelligible]?

Bundy: I'm at your service.

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible] I thought I, we might be in touch with you . . .

Bundy: I'll be right there. I can come down, or at supper privately. Either way.

[Laughter]

Speaker ?: Well, uh, why don't we, why don't we see what it looks like . . .

Speaker ?: Yeah.

Speaker ?: . . . uh, [starting?] under way.

Ball?: We're trying to run this with a minimum of manpower and it must still [words unintelligible].

[Several speakers speak at once and only the following words are intelligible.]

Bundy: We must do.

Taylor?: Secretarial problems. This has been one of the problems.

Speaker ?: Well, I think I could bust out a staff . . .

Bundy: I have two, extremely, totally . . .

McNamara: I've got, I'd trust my staff anywhere, I mean, I. . . . They [word unintelligible]. . . . I've got my car out here, Admiral.

Speaker ?: Oh, it's out this way.

McNamara: Yeah. All right. Good night.

Bundy: Good night.

Speaker ?: [Words unintelligible]

[Conversations end. Room noises for almost four minutes. Telephone rings in the distance.]

Lincoln: Hello. [In the distance.]

[Footsteps]

Cleaning man: Yes, lady, I'm gonna bring this.

Lincoln: Hello, [words unintelligible]/[left?].

Cleaning man: [Laughs] Here. There's just some stacks, that's all.

[Recording ends.]